

Appendix F

NCO Induction Ceremony

F-1. The NCO induction ceremony is a celebration of the newly promoted joining the ranks of a professional noncommissioned officer corps and emphasizes and builds on the pride we all share as members of such an elite corps. The ceremony should also serve to honor the memory of those men and women of the NCO Corps who have served with pride and distinction.

“A pat on the back applied at the proper moment in the circumstances can have a dramatic influence in developing leader.”

SMA William G. Bainbridge

F-2. Induction ceremonies should in no way be used as an opportunity for hazing, but more as a rite of passage. It allows fellow NCOs of a unit to build and develop a cohesive bond, support team development and serve as a legacy for future NCO Induction Ceremonies.

F-3. The importance of recognizing the transition from “just one of the guys or gals” to a noncommissioned officer should be shared among the superiors, peers and soldiers of the newly promoted. The induction ceremony should be held separate and to serve as an extension of the promotion ceremony. Typical Army promotion effective dates occur on the first day of a month and when possible, so should the induction ceremony.

SETTING UP

F-4. The NCO induction ceremony is typically conducted at the Battalion (or equivalent) level. Though it can be held at higher or lower levels, this document will provide an example for a Battalion NCO induction ceremony. By changing the titles of key NCO leaders to meet your own need, you can tailor this document to your own organization.

LOCATION

F-5. Though the location of the ceremony is not as important as the content, consider the following: As part of the socialization process of newly promoted noncommissioned officers, the induction ceremony should be held in a social meeting area, such as NCO, community, or all-ranks club. Alternately, a well equipped gymnasium, post theater, or for smaller ceremonies, a unit dayroom could be used. Chapel use is discouraged to avoid perceptions of “ritualistic” or “mystic” overtones that go directly against the intended result.

TIMING

F-6. As part of the socialization process for new noncommissioned officers, the induction ceremony should be scheduled as a training event on the training calendar. The formal portion should take place during the duty day, prior to retreat. By making it a training event during duty hours, you not only get maximum participation, but command support (Commanders approve training schedules). The optimum time is 1630 to 1700 for the formal portion (the ceremony) and 1700-1730 for the informal portion (greetings, congratulations and socializing).

KEY PERSONNEL

F-7. As the senior NCO of the command, the battalion command sergeant major serves as the host of the NCO induction ceremony. The first sergeants are the CSM's assistants and they compose the "Official Party." If desired, a guest speaker for the ceremony may be included and also is a part of the official party. A narrator will serve as the Master of Ceremonies.

INVITED GUESTS AND VIPS

F-8. As a wholly noncommissioned officer sponsored event, guests and VIPs should be limited to current and former US Army NCOs. Certain situations may warrant an officer or civilian to attend and will not detract from the nature of the occasion. Typical invited guests could include higher echelon command sergeants major (brigade, division, regimental, commandant), installation or base support battalion (BSB) command sergeants major, or even lateral (battalion level) command sergeants major. Additionally, special guests serving as motivational speakers should be included (though not required) as part of an induction ceremony.

EQUIPMENT REQUIRED

F-9. Though each ceremony can be as different as the people it recognizes can, a commonality should be shared between them. The following items should be available for each:

- A passage of a citation for bravery or valor in the face of difficulty demonstrated by a noncommissioned officer.
- Copies of the NCO Creed, one per inductee.
- FM 7-22.7 , *The Army Noncommissioned Officer Guide*, one per inductee.
- Sound system, if needed. Requirement based only on the number present and the "command voice" of the participants.
- Programs (including the words to the NCO Creed) if desired.

CEREMONY CONDUCT

F-10. Appendix F and the example ceremony it contains provide a common basis from which to begin. Tailor it to suit your specific needs. The goal is to present a professional and memorable NCO induction ceremony.

- **PLACES:** Official party – Waiting outside the ceremony room.
Narrator – At the sound system/podium.
Inductees – Formed in advance at an appropriate location. Each should have a copy (or portion) of the NCO Creed.
(2-minutes before ceremony begins)
- **NARRATOR:** Ladies and Gentlemen, the ceremony will begin in two minutes. (At the predetermined time)
- **NARRATOR:** Please rise for the official party.
(Official party arrives, marches to designated location. Stops, then takes appropriate positions)
- **NARRATOR:** Welcome to (this months) (month name) NCO induction ceremony where we recognize the passing of the group before you (the inductees) into the ranks of the time-honored United States Army Noncommissioned Officer Corps. Today's official party consists of (names). The tradition of commemorating the passing of a soldier to a noncommissioned officer can be traced to the Army of Frederick the Great. Before one could be recognized in the full status of an NCO, he was required to stand four watches, one every four days.

At the first watch the private soldiers appeared and claimed a gift of bread and brandy. The company NCOs came to the second watch for beer and tobacco and the First Sergeant reserved his visit for the third watch, when he was presented with a glass of wine and a piece of tobacco on a tin plate¹. Today, we commemorate this rite of passage as a celebration of the newly promoted joining the ranks of a professional noncommissioned officer corps and emphasize and build on the pride we all share as members of such an elite corps. We also serve to honor the memory of those men and women of the NCO Corps who have served with pride and distinction. Today, we remember one of our own, one whose courage should not go unremembered:
- **NARRATOR:** (read citation. Include name, unit, etc.)
- **NARRATOR:** Since the earliest days of our Army, the noncommissioned officer has been recognized as one who instills discipline and order within a unit. Baron Friedrich von Steuben, the US Army's first "Drill-Master" listed in his *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States*, the **Blue Book** that: "Each Sergeant and Corporal will be answerable for the squad committed to his care. He must pay particular attention to their conduct in every respect and that they keep themselves and their arms always clean. In dealing with recruits, they must exercise all their patience and while on the march, the noncommissioned officers must preserve order and regularity."

Today, we continue that tradition. (Name), our (guest speaker)(CSM) now will share his/her instructions with our newest sergeants and corporals.

- **SPEAKER:** (motivational speech)
- **NARRATOR:** The Creed of the Noncommissioned Officer has served as a guiding document for noncommissioned officers since its inception in 1973, though its concepts have been always been a part of our Corps. Each major paragraph begins with three letters: N, C and O. These words have inspired noncommissioned officers and have served as a compass to guide us down the right paths that we encounter. Today, our newest noncommissioned officers will affirm their commitment to the professionalism of our corps and become a part of the "Backbone" of the Army.

(Inductees rise)

(Have all present read the NCO Creed together.) Note: provide copies in advance to all present.

- **CSM/HOST:** Moves to each inductee, issues them a copy of FM 7-22.7, *The Army Noncommissioned Officer Guide*, then shakes their hand and congratulates them.
- **ALL PRESENT:** Applause.
- **NARRATOR:** As we conclude today's ceremony, we ask you to greet our newest inductees and join us in welcoming them to the Corps. Please rise for the exit of the official party.
- **OFFICIAL PARTY:** (Departs. Ceremony ends. Informal portion begins -- socializing).

"Some of the old soldiers out there who have perhaps grown a bit cynical and too sophisticated for ceremonies think you have the option to decline a ceremony for yourself.

'Sir, just give the orders and I'll sew on my stripes tonight in the privacy of my home,' you might say; or 'Sir, don't go to the trouble of setting up an ceremony: you can just give me the stripe right here in your office.'

Does that sound familiar? Stop a minute to consider how selfless you are supposed to be as a leader. A military ceremony is not yours even if you are the sole reason for the ceremony. It belongs to all the soldiers. Don't miss any opportunity to stop and recognize well-deserving soldiers, especially the opportunity to reward young soldiers receiving their first awards or advancements a simple tradition of our Army packed with a powerful stimulus for soldiers."

CSM Joshua Perry

The History of the NCO Creed

The Creed has existed in different versions for a number of years. Long into their careers, sergeants remember reciting the NCO Creed during their induction into the NCO Corps. Nearly every NCO's office or home has a copy hanging on a wall. Some have intricate etchings in metal on a wooden plaque, or printed in fine calligraphy. But a quick glance at any copy of the NCO Creed and you will see no author's name at the bottom. The origin of the NCO Creed is a story of its own.

In 1973, the Army (and the noncommissioned officer corps) was in turmoil. Of the post-Vietnam developments in American military policy, the most influential in shaping the Army was the advent of the Modern Volunteer Army. With the inception of the Noncommissioned Officer Candidate Course, many young sergeants were not the skilled trainers of the past and were only trained to perform a specific job; squad leaders in Vietnam. The noncommissioned officer system was under development and the army was rewriting its Field Manual 22-100, *Leadership*, to set a road map for leaders to follow.

Of those working on the challenges at hand, one of the only NCO-pure instructional departments at the U.S Army Infantry School (USAIS) at Fort Benning, Georgia, GA was the NCO Subcommittee of the Command and Leadership Committee in the Leadership Department. Besides training soldiers at the Noncommissioned Officers Academy, these NCOs also developed instructional material and worked as part of the team developing model leadership programs of instruction.

During one brainstorming session, SFC Earle Brigham recalls writing three letters on a plain white sheet of paper... N-C-O. From those three letters they began to build the NCO Creed. The idea behind developing a creed was to give noncommissioned officers a "yardstick by which to measure themselves."

When it was ultimately approved, the NCO Creed was printed on the inside cover of the special texts issued to students attending the NCO courses at Fort Benning, beginning in 1974. Though the NCO Creed was submitted higher for

approval and distribution Army-wide, it was not formalized by an official army publication until 11 years later.

Though it has been rewritten in different ways, the NCO Creed still begins its paragraphs with those three letters: N-C-O. It continues to guide and reinforce the values of each new generation of noncommissioned officers.

